

Our History

Sound Effects: Bombs, cannons, artillery fire

NARRATOR: Only nine years after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the United States found itself once again in the throes of an unexpected war--this time on the Korean Peninsula.

But the U.S. had seriously downsized its cryptologic operations at the end of World War II. And the remaining resources were focused on the Soviet Union. The Nations' military and civilian code makers and code breakers needed to be united.

With the stroke of his pen, President Truman created one truly integrated organization: the National Security Agency. NSA opened its doors in November of 1952, building on the legacy of its predecessor, the Armed Forces Security Agency.

The National Security Agency began supporting warfighters on the Korean battlefields from its headquarters in Washington, D.C. NSA cryptologists helped General Walker avoid enemy fire on the Pusan Perimeter and set the groundwork for General MacArthur's victorious landing at Inchon.

After the armistice, U.S. leaders once again turned their attention to the Soviet threat.

((COUNTING IN RUSSIAN))

The Soviets had begun building and testing nuclear weapons. Atomic bomb hysteria swept the Nation's capital.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff believed the city would be a potential bombing target.

So NSA moved to its current location at Fort Meade, Maryland, in 1957.

PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY: The weapons of war must be abolished before they abolish us.

NARRATOR: By 1961, Cold war tensions took us to the brink of a nuclear war. The nation's worst nightmare was confirmed.

PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY: Unmistakable evidence has established the fact that a series of offensive missile sites is now in preparation on the island of Cuba.

NARRATOR: President Kennedy imposed a strict blockade on military shipments to Cuba. If the Soviets were to challenge the U.S. fleet, it could mean war.

NSA closely monitored the Russian Fleet's movements. The Agency would be the first to inform the President when the Russians stood down. Signals Intelligence helped President Kennedy

manage the day-to-day aspects of the crisis and avoid armed conflict, which might have escalated into nuclear war.

A great victory of the cold war was won, but a crisis was festering in Southeast Asia. U.S. cryptologists were dispatched to Vietnam four years before America's full military involvement. To intercept the adversary's communications, they had to get close to enemy lines and would be among the first American casualties.

When U.S. Troops returned home, NSA cryptologists stayed behind to provide intelligence and secure communications support to the U.S. embassy. They stayed until it was almost too late.

The end of the Cold War emphasized the value of Signals Intelligence and Information Assurance. NSA continued to support policymakers and combatant commanders in conflicts around the globe with real-time actionable intelligence and state-of-the-art secure communications. NSA's research contributed significantly to the development of the Super Computer, the cassette tape, the microchip, quantum mathematics, nanotechnology, biometrics, semiconductor technology.

DAVE HATCH: Despite technical innovations, cryptology still remains a dangerous profession for those who practice it. Most people don't realize that cryptology is an inherently dangerous business. Since 1945, over 150 American cryptologists, both military and civilian, have given their lives in the service of their country.

NARRATOR: As the turn of the century approached, new challenges emerged. NSA would need to be more agile than ever before.